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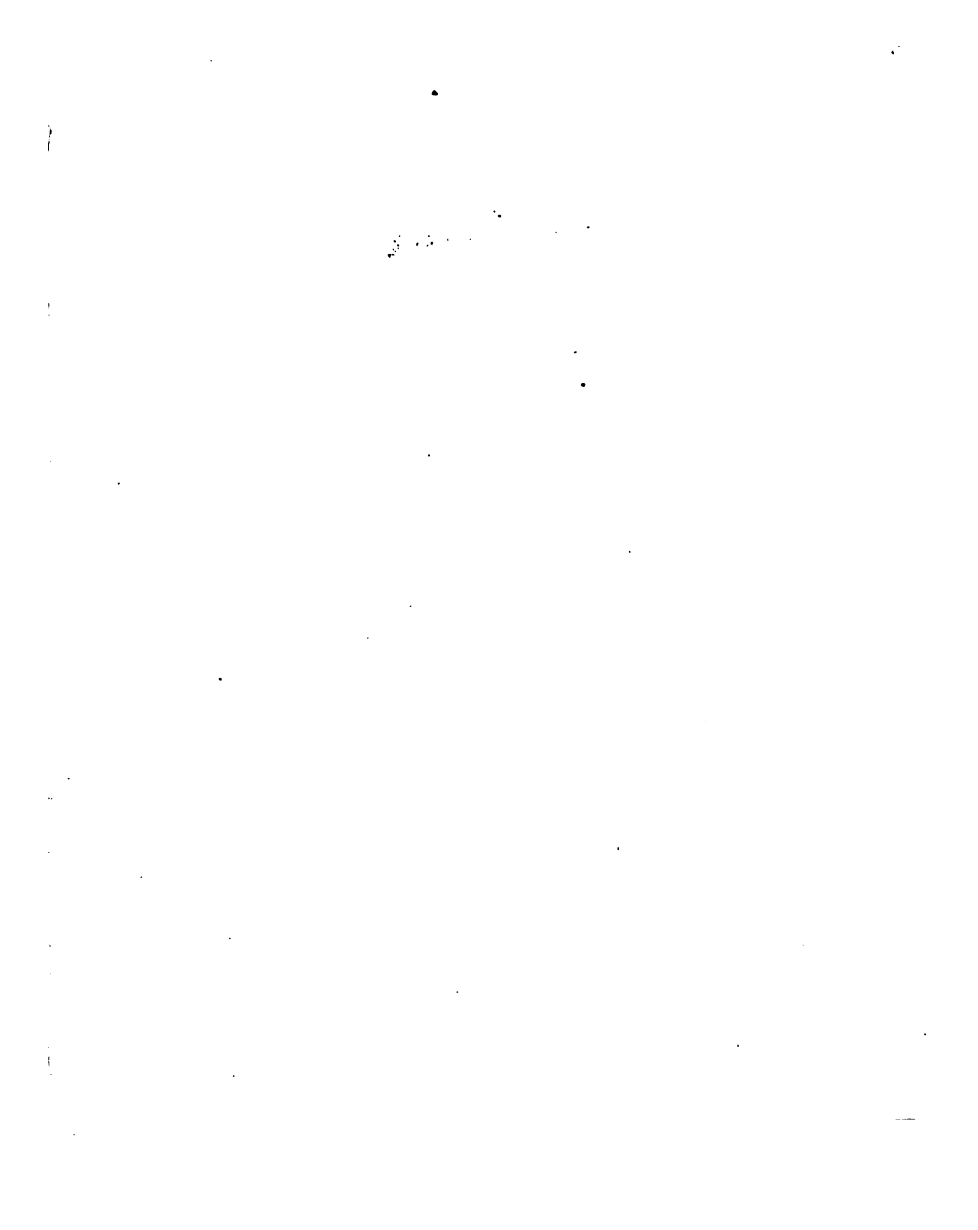
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Monastic Remains near Oxford. ❧ ❧ ❧

BY

E. S. BOUCHIER, M.A.,

EXETER COLLEGE.

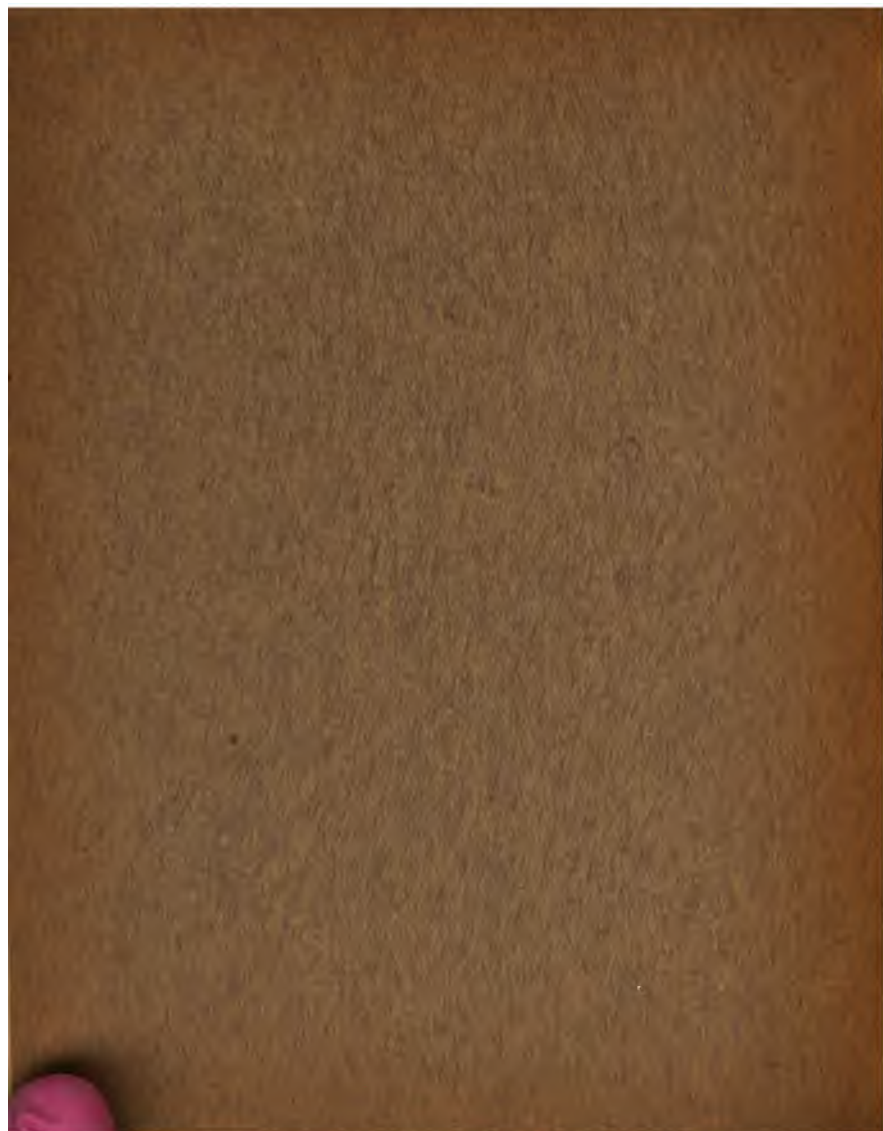
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ABINGDON ABBEY. GUEST HOUSE AND PRIOR'S LODGINGS.



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THESE notes on neighbouring monastic ruins are substantially the same as the articles which appeared in various numbers of the *Oxford Chronicle* between April and September, 1904.

As many of the ruins, in spite of their historic interest, are but of small extent, I have usually made each the central point of an excursion, adding suggestions as to the chief features of other buildings in the same district.

I have not treated of the two important houses of Reading and Dorchester, where much that is valuable is still to be found. The first of these has lately been made the subject of a careful monograph by J. B. Hurry (London, 1901), and Dorchester Abbey was fully described in one of Mr. Parker's earlier publications, and more lately in *Near Oxford*, published by Messrs. Alden & Co. Ltd., in which may also be found descriptions and illustrations of many of the places alluded to in the following pages.

I should be grateful for any corrections or suggested additions.

E. S. B.

Jan. 21st, 1905.

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ABINGDON ABBEY. GUEST-HOUSE AND PRIOR'S

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I.

Table of Religious Houses within about Thirty Miles of Oxford.

PLACE.	COUNTY.	DATE.	ORDER.	REMAINS.
<i>Abingdon</i>	Berks	7th cent.	<i>Ben.</i>	Prior's house, gateway, crypt, guestern-house.
(Gt. Milton, a cell to above)				
<i>Aylesbury</i>	Bucks	1386	<i>Fran.</i>	
<i>Bicester</i>	Oxon	1182	<i>Aug.</i>	Guest-house, carvings in church.
<i>Bruerne</i>	„	1147	<i>Cist.</i>	
<i>Canons Ashby</i>	Northa	t. Hen. III	<i>Aug.</i>	West end of church.
<i>Chalcombe</i>	„	t. Hen. II	<i>Aug.</i>	Fragments in manor.
<i>Chetwode</i>	Bucks	1246	<i>Aug.</i>	East end of church.
<i>Clattercote</i>	Oxon	t. Hen. III.	<i>Gilb.</i>	Walls and cellars.
<i>Cogges</i>	„	1103	<i>Ben. alien.</i>	Church.
<i>Donnington</i>	Berks	1360	<i>Trin.</i>	
<i>Dorchester</i>	Oxon	1140	<i>Aug.</i>	Church, chapter-house.
<i>E. Hendred</i>	Berks	t. Hen. V	<i>Carth.</i>	Chapel.
<i>Eynsham</i>	Oxon	1005	<i>Ben.</i>	Cross.
<i>Faringdon</i>	Berks	1203	<i>Cist.</i>	
<i>Godstow</i>	Oxon	1136	<i>Ben. nun.</i>	Chapter-house, walls.
<i>Goring</i>	„	t. Hen. II	<i>Aug. nun.</i>	Church.
<i>Gosford</i>	„	12th cent.	<i>Hosp. nun.</i>	
<i>Gt. Coxwell</i>	Berks	13th cent.	<i>Cist.</i>	Barn.
<i>Littlemore</i>	Oxon	t. Hen. II	<i>Ben. nun.</i>	Perp. domestic build- ings.
<i>Minster Lovel</i>	„	1210	<i>Ben. alien.</i>	
<i>Notley</i>	Bucks	1162	<i>Aug.</i>	Refectory, cloisters, &c.

Monastic Remains near Oxford.

PLACE.	COUNTY.	DATE.	ORDER.	REMAINS.
<i>Nuffield</i>	Oxon	t. Ed. III	<i>Trin.</i>	
<i>Osney</i>	„	1129	<i>Aug.</i>	Fragments in Osney mill and cemetery.
(Steeple Barton, a cell of above).				
<i>Oxford</i> (St. Frideswide)	„	8th cent.	<i>Ben. nun., then Aug.</i>	Church, chapter-house, refectory.
„ (seven friaries)	„	13th cent.		
<i>Poughley</i>	Berks	1160	<i>Aug.</i>	E. E. fragments.
<i>Quenington</i>	Glos	12th cent.	<i>Hosp.</i>	Gateway.*
<i>Reading</i>	Berks	1121	<i>Ben.</i>	Walls of church chapter-house, &c.
„	„	1233	<i>Fran.</i>	Nave of church.
<i>Rewley</i>	Oxon	1280	<i>Cist.</i>	Gateway and walls.
<i>Sandford</i>	„	1274	<i>Temp., then Hosp.</i>	Part of chapel.
<i>Snelshall</i>	Bucks	t. Hen. III	<i>Ben. alien.</i>	Incorporated in Tattenhoe church.
<i>Steventon</i>	Berks	t. Hen. I	<i>Ben. alien.</i>	
<i>Studley</i>	Oxon	t. Hen. II	<i>Ben. nun.</i>	Perp. domestic buildings.†
<i>Swyncombe</i>	„	1087	<i>Ben. alien.</i>	
<i>Thame</i>	„	1140	<i>Cist.</i>	
<i>Wallingford</i>	Berks	11th cent.	<i>Ben.</i>	
<i>Wroxton</i>	Oxon	1230	<i>Aug.</i>	Decorated chapel and domestic buildings.

* *Vid.* Hutton, *Thames and Cotswold*, pp. 148-9, where an illustration is given. Portions of a cell to this house have been discovered at Chedworth; cf. Branch, *Cotswold and Vale* (Cheltenham, 1904).

† *Vid.* Meade-Falkner, *History of Oxfordshire*, p. 157.

II.

Chetwode.

A DISTINCTIVE charm rests about the remains of ancient abbeys and priories. Not only are they usually placed in peaceful spots, often of great natural beauty, but the buildings themselves exhibit a unity and purity of design comparatively rare in the more mixed styles of parish churches. The wealthy founders of these houses spared no expense in the construction of the monastic buildings; and the monks themselves, besides being the spiritual directors, lawyers, physicians, school teachers, and poor-law guardians of their age, possessed considerable architectural knowledge, and provided that all restorations should be in keeping with the original fabric.

The little priory to which this excursion is directed belonged to black canons of the Augustinian order, the second in importance of the great religious orders, but one possessing in this neighbourhood as many settlements as the Benedictines themselves. In Oxford city they owned the important priory of St. Frideswide, now the cathedral church of the diocese, and its still greater neighbour at Oseney; while in a small radius we find Augustinian abbeys or priories at Bicester, Chalcombe, Dorchester, Notley, and Wroxton, together with a nunnery of the same order at Goring.

Chetwode Priory was founded in 1244 by Ralph de Norwich, and the bulk of the church as it now stands belongs to his era. This convent was never very flourishing; it had no dependencies except the small hermitage of St. Werburgh at Brill; and after an existence of little more than two centuries was suppressed owing to its poverty, and the revenues transferred to the sister establishment at Notley. As a consequence the former parish church was allowed to go to ruin, and that of the priory became

parochial, to which cause we owe the preservation of a portion of wonderfully pure Early English work.

The nearest station, Fimmere on the G.C.R., is of little service to inhabitants of Oxford, and the easiest way to Chetwode is to alight at Marsh Gibbon on the L.N.W.R., pass under the bridge, and keep on up the hill to a finger-post. Those who prefer the high road should go straight on here till the Great Central line is crossed, when a turn to the left at the next fork leads direct to the Chetwode road. In dry summer weather the pedestrian who is equal to a rough walk over the meadows will find it shorter to turn to the left at the above finger-post, and at the entrance to Poundon follow a diagonal footpath to the right, which after some windings leads to the isolated Oxfordshire village of Goddington. Just before the church take another field path to the left, and this after about a mile leads past a picturesque gabled farm into Chetwode.

The first view of the church from the west is a little disappointing. An unappreciative age has cut short much of the nave and erected a tower and west front in what is commonly called the "churchwarden" style. It is not till the chancel is reached, a building somewhat resembling the Lady Chapel of Hereford, that we recognize the beauty of the lancet style at its best. The foliage on the capitals is most delicately executed, that on the shafts of the north windows being diversified with figures of strange wild beasts. The south windows contain portions of rich contemporary glass, much of it of dazzling whiteness contrasted with coloured medallions representing saints, coats of arms, or bishops in full processional vestments. Beneath these are sedilia, highly enriched with projecting dog-tooth, the enclosing arches with their curiously irregular outline and their cross-bars in the head perhaps being intended to recall the bare branches of the trees which once encircled this "church in a wood.*" An almost unique feature in these sedilia is that

* Mitton, *Guide to Buckinghamshire*, p. 131.

one of the arches encloses the priest's door, which opens direct on to the lawn of the present Priory House, and lets in a flood of sunlight over the peaceful building. On the north side is a chantry, reached by a flight of steps, and containing a great square family-pew, with its own fireplace.

The "Priory House" contains only small portions of the monastic buildings, and others are incorporated in Lord Lawrence's house of Chetwode Manor, a short distance further north.

A return may be made by Preston Bisset, where is a fine Decorated church, to Hillesden, three miles from Chetwode. Here the church affords one of the best examples in this district of the florid Gothic of Henry VII's period. Behind the church is a stately avenue, once leading to the manor-house, which withstood a historic siege in the Civil Wars, and beyond this a pleasant field-path, some two miles long, takes us to Steeple Claydon, where is a station on the L.N.W.R.

III.

Bicester.

HERE we again find ourselves surrounded by memories of the black canons. This Augustinian order was by no means one of the most ascetic, nor did it seek, like the Carthusian and Cistercian, to give its members any great degree of seclusion. Founded to direct and control parish and cathedral clergy by subjecting them to the regulations of monastic life, it left them free to work among the poor, and to preach and teach in the convent churches, which were built with wide and lofty naves, calculated to admit large congregations. The canons thus formed an intermediate body between monks, not necessarily in orders, and secular clergy; and if, as was often the case, the convent stood in the neighbourhood of a small town they might

become responsible for the services in the parish church, of which they were often patrons, instead of deputing this duty, as the Benedictines did, to a secular "vicar." Another branch of religious work very generally undertaken by Austin canons or canonesses was the management of "hospitals," or homes for the aged and infirm poor. Two or three religious resided in the hospital, under the direction of a prior, master, or prioress, and formed a corporation capable of holding real property. The best known in this county were Burford Priory, St. John's at Banbury (specially set apart for lepers), St. Bartholomew, Cowley (of which the chapel remains), and Ewelme. This last is an instance, unfortunately not a common one, of a hospital surviving the dissolution, and lasting, of course under "secular" management, to the present time.

Individual Augustinian houses were under the control, not only of the bishop of the diocese, but of the mandates of the general chapters of the Order, which their priors were bound to attend. This chapter enforced, amongst others, the very salutary regulations by which convents with sufficient wealth were required to establish halls for some of their novices in a university town, or to provide a competent instructor within the convent.

The priory of SS. Mary and Eadburgh* of Bicester was founded by the Norman lord of the manor, Gilbert Basset, grandson of the builder of the present parish church, in 1182 for a prior and eleven canons, and endowed with considerable estates in and about the town. The canons received the revenues of the parish church and those of three other parishes, and were granted the manor-house as a residence until the convent buildings were finished. During the next two centuries, benefactions, chiefly lands in the same part of the county, were numerous, and the priory, though never very wealthy, possessed at the dissolution revenues valued at about £150.

A conjectural plan of the arrangement of the various buildings

* St. Eadburgh was a nun of Winchester and daughter of King Edward the Elder. The church of Stratton Audley has the same dedication.

may be found in Blomfield's *History of Bicester*. The site was some rough ground still discernible to the S.E. of the church, where foundations have been come upon at different times. At the N.E. end of the enclosure was the priory church, with its cloister as usual on the south side of the nave, and beyond this the chapter-house. Still further south was a quadrangle, round which were ranged domestic buildings—the prior's house, canons' dormitory, kitchen, laundry, etc. These chambers were surrounded on three sides by gardens, and at the S.E. corner of the latter stood the hospice, or guest-house, where the hospitaller gave entertainment to all comers for a day and a night.

This guest-house, measuring 41 ft. in length by about 16 in breadth, is the only part of the priory remaining in its original position. Known as "Priory Cottage," it may be reached from the station by turning to the left at "St. Edburgh's Hall," and to the left again at the end of the lane. It is a two-storied building, with high-pitched roof of tiles, and from the moulding of the windows may be assigned to the second half of the 15th century. The window on the east face is of two lights under a square dripstone, and a smaller blocked window may be noticed under the gable. The windows of the north face, though now partly blocked, are of a more ornate description, each light being cusped. In spite of brick chimneys and other modern additions, the building, especially on its rose-covered north face, is picturesque.

A few particulars are preserved about the priory church, but little is known of the other buildings. The style was at first Transition Norman, and like most other exclusively conventual churches, it was cruciform with central tower. Early in the 14th century a great rebuilding took place, and when the church was re-consecrated in 1312 it exceeded that of the parish in size. The east window, of which portions have been found in modern times, had five lancets like that of Chetwode.

It was only when their convent was complete that the canons could attend to the needs of the parish church, of which they

were patrons. The elder Gilbert Basset had left this unfinished. The nave, transepts, and chancel were built, the first incorporating one triangular arch from an earlier Saxon church, and the central tower was high enough to support the roofs, but the western tower arch was incomplete, and there were as yet no aisles. About the middle of the 13th century the priory caused a south aisle to be added, and a century later one on the north, with the present east window and other portions. No progress was made with the tower, and by the 15th century the idea of a central tower was abandoned and the present western one erected, together with the fine north porch ascribed by Parker to c. 1430.

Two scholars were for a time maintained at Oxford, in a house in School St. (where Brasenose College now is) purchased from the Abbey of Oseney; but later we hear of a "clerk of Oxford to teach grammar within the priory, for the instruction of the canons.*"

The oval seal of the priory, or Ecclesia de Burnecester (this being the old name of the village on the "burn" flowing past the Roman "camp" of Alchester), represented whole length figures of the Virgin and Child and of St. Eadburgh, under a double Gothic canopy, with the priory arms added *in exercue*. This seal was appended to the acknowledgment of the king's supremacy and the renunciation of papal authority, still extant and signed by the prior and canons in 1534. Five years later the priory was suppressed, the prior receiving a pension of £24 from the Crown. His name was William Browne, and he had migrated thither from Ipswich in 1528, after St. Peter's Priory in that place had been dissolved in furtherance of Wolsey's ambitious schemes.

The church and cloisters were immediately destroyed, but some of the domestic buildings lasted for several generations. Nothing now remains but the little guest-house and pieces of

* Blomfield, p. 119.

carved stone removed from the priory to the parish church. Over the south nave arcade may be noticed two panels inserted in the wall, each of which represents three knights in armour under cinquefoiled arches, between the heads of which are plain shields. The work is of Decorated character, and apparently comes from the sides of an altar tomb. Beneath the westernmost of these a female figure in nun's dress under a canopy and resting on a corbel may represent St. Eadburgh. Beneath the other panel are three pinnacles, richly crocketed, of a Decorated niche affixed to the columns of a nave pier. Over the graceful south door outside is a curious half-length female figure in a triangular niche. These fragments seem all to belong to the church as rebuilt in the early Decorated period, and the beauty of the style prevailing at that time makes its wanton destruction a matter of the deepest regret.

IV.

Canons Ashby.

THE western portions of Northamptonshire include much of typical English midland scenery; grassy and well-wooded throughout, it is in the south only undulating, further north, in the direction of Naseby, the chief watershed of central England, gradually rising to a high tableland.

This peaceful district of "spires and squires," of fine churches and old-fashioned country seats, lies far from centres of population, and is completely neglected by the tourist. It is possible to walk for miles through flowery lanes without sighting a human being, and only in the last five years has a main line of railway invaded these solitudes.

The opening of the G.C.R. has placed this district within less than an hour's journey from Oxford; and at Woodford station, the next beyond Banbury and not far from the head-waters of

the Cherwell, this excursion had better begin. From the station turn to the right into the village, then left to the church. It has a few objects of interest, especially a well-preserved brass of a priest (c. 1400), some fine carving on pews, and a stone effigy of a lady whose head rests on a cushion supported by angels blowing horns. This is doubtfully identified with Alice Perrers, a Court favourite of the time of Edward III. and lady of the manor of Woodford.

For Canons Ashby keep down the hill to the east of the church and up the next hill. At the cross-roads the highway bears round to the left, but the pedestrian will do well to follow the advice of the finger-post and take the cart-track over the fields past a shining gorse hedge, rejoining the road just over two miles from Woodford. Half a mile further the priory house comes into sight on the right, with the church facing it.

The Augustinian priory of Canons Ashby, or Esseby Canoniorum as it was officially called, had no very eventful history, perhaps owing to its remote position, but the architecture of the church is unusually good, and for a small house, consisting at the Dissolution of only a prior and thirteen canons, the priory was comparatively wealthy. Thus shortly before the suppression we hear of the prior, Richard Colles, ordering from a mercer in London a cloth of silver worked with fleurs-de-lys and angels, and valued at £39 (some £400 of our money). This was delivered, but very soon after passed into the king's hands. One is glad to think that it was to Henry and not to the canons that the bill was sent in.*

Founded in the time of Henry III, perhaps by Stephen de Leya, the lord of the manor of Ashby, who stands first in the list of benefactors, the priory by gifts from many other land-owners became possessed of numerous estates in the county besides the manor of Hanwell in Oxfordshire. It was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and the priory seal of the Virgin and Child

* Gasquet, *Henry VIII. and the English Monasteries*, ii. 419.

may still be seen attached to the acknowledgment of the royal supremacy signed in 1534 and preserved at Westminster.

When the smaller religious houses fell in 1536 Canons Ashby was valued at about £120, and its estates passed for the most part into the hands of the great Oxfordshire family of Cope, and later into those of the Dryden family, with descendants of whom in the female line they still remain.

Great havoc was committed with the priory buildings in the century following the Dissolution. The whole of the east and south portions of the church were destroyed, together with the cloisters, and the domestic buildings gradually gave place to the present mansion, principally Elizabethan, but with later additions. It is a somewhat gaunt building, of no great elevation, chiefly of mellow red brick, and has some good oriel windows, but stands too near the road and has too little wood about it to show to very great advantage.

Its literary associations are of interest. Edmund Spenser stayed here as the guest of the Drydens, and readers of the *Faerie Queene* will remember his mention of the neighbouring Cherwell as a "small groom" supporting the failing steps of the blind and aged Isis. Here a century later visited John Dryden, nephew of the owner of the priory, and here his son Erasmus, who succeeded to the baronetcy, spent his last years, and lies buried in the church. In the time of George II a frequent guest of the Drydens was Samuel Richardson, and it is from "Ashby Cannons" that at the beginning of *Sir Charles Grandison* Lucy Selby writes to her Harriet Byron. Such places as this are indeed well fitted to be the scene of some quiet eighteenth century romance, and we may well imagine Miss Austen to have had a seat of this kind in view in her account of the Northamptonshire *Mansfield Park*, with its "lawns and plantations of freshest green."

Though the domestic buildings are completely gone, names like the "Canons' Walk" or the "Vineyard" within the park keep alive the memory of the black canons who dwelt here for three centuries. Just after passing the house the splendid west

front of the priory church comes into sight on the left, at first appearing strangely incongruous with the tiny hamlet of five or six cottages and the solitary lanes around ; but it is soon found to be little more than a shell, a tower and west front suitable for an abbey joined to a parish church of the smallest dimensions. The N.W. tower of 93 ft. is very massive, with walls more than six feet thick ; it is richly adorned with crocketed buttresses, ornamented with ball-flower, and on the west face has an early Decorated arcading of pointed arches enclosing trefoils. The west front of the nave and surviving aisle is nearly a century earlier, and presents a fine example of the best Early English work. The central door is deeply recessed, the six shafts on either side being enriched with elaborate foliage, while round the edge ran two lines of dog-tooth, now much mutilated. On either side is an arcade of three trefoil-headed arches, the capitals here also being foliated. The Perpendicular west window is of five lights, under a slightly ogee-shaped arch deeply undercut within, and having a passage running along beneath it.

The key may be obtained at the last cottage on the left before the church, but there is not much to see inside, the E. and S. walls having been rebuilt in a debased style. An Early English arcade separates nave and aisle, and there is a good panelled font. Though the church is nominally parochial it has no endowment or resident incumbent, and much resembles a private chapel. The walls are covered with memorials of the Dryden family, boards with their coats of arms, and ancient armour. In the floor are brasses and memorial tablets, the crest of the lion rampant and two stars reappearing everywhere.

Where the ground dips by a large chestnut tree in the church-yard the east wall seems to have stood, and the total length was not much less than 220 ft. Nearly facing the west front a projecting octagonal pillar in the opposite wall should be noticed. This was once part of the doorway leading from the domestic buildings into the cloisters, through the site of which the road now runs.





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NOTLEY ABBEY, BUCKS.

V.

Notley.

THE first nine miles of the road to Thame present few objects of interest, and the tourist who has no long time at his disposal will do well to go by the G.W.R. as far as Tiddington, where he will find himself in a quiet and pleasantly wooded neighbourhood near the course of the Thame, and within reach of several architectural beauties. The turn to the right beyond the station leads to Great Haseley, perhaps the finest of the smaller Oxfordshire churches, the graceful Decorated chancel of which has been conjectured to come from the same hand as the contemporary Merton chapel. Soon after this turn another lane leads through a gate past Albury to the once famous manor of Rycote. Here the beautiful Perpendicular chapel, decaying in its thicket of bushes and nettles, is "closed to visitors," but the fine north door, the pinnacles, and the quaint stone greyhounds at the east end should be noticed. The adjoining farmhouse retains a few marks of its ancient grandeur—a hexagonal brick chimney, and a ruinous octagonal tower of the Tudor period in the garden.

Continuing as far as the main road, a walk of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles leads into the town of Thame, where the church is at once visible on the left. The best work in it belongs to the 13th century, and was probably carried out under the direction of Bishop Grostête, who made the two towns of Thame and Aylesbury prebends of his see of Lincoln. The chancel and font are good Early English, but the church underwent great alterations in the 15th century, when the transepts and upper part of the tower were constructed.

To the west of the church are portions of the prebendal house, also the work, we may suppose, of Lincoln architects. It belongs

partly to the 13th century, with considerable late Perpendicular additions. The most perfect portion is the detached Early English chapel, the bell-cote and lancet windows of which can be descried over the wall. Unfortunately this chapel also, which for elegance has been compared to parts of Lincoln cathedral, is in private hands, and the owner does not allow strangers to pass the gates.

Nearly opposite, to the south of the church, another relic of antiquity remains in the Old Grammar School, once belonging to Lord Williams' foundation.

For Notley, cross the bridge to the north of the church, and after passing the "Castle Inn" take the field path to the right. After rather more than a mile this changes to a rough lane, which curves round to the sequestered ruins close by the bank of the Thame. The abbey was one of the wealthiest in the county, its yearly revenues before the Dissolution being assessed at £495, a sum which enabled it to hold its own till the suppression of the greater monasteries in 1538.

It was founded in the middle of the 12th century by Walter Giffard, Earl of Buckingham, for Augustinian canons of the order of St. Nicholas of Arouaise in Artois, who had some three other houses in this country. They were noted for the strictness of their rules, and their churches displayed great irregularity of ground plan, sometimes, as at Lilleshall, Shropshire, being altogether without aisles. Notley Abbey, which was dedicated to the Virgin and John the Baptist, was known as the Abbey "de parco Crendon" or "de parco super Thamam," from the wood which once surrounded it.* The abbot possessed the pastoral staff as a mark of his high position, and the house had some subordinate cells. One was by the bridge at Caversham, the chapel of which was destroyed by the notorious Dr. London,

* The abbey seal is however inscribed SIGILLVM SANCTE MARIE DE NVTLIE. It represents the Virgin and Child; on one side a star, on the other a crescent. The Virgin is crowned and seated, holding a lily in her right hand.

Warden of New College, one of Henry VIII's Visitors, who also inflicted great damage on the neighbouring church of the Franciscans in Reading. One or two canons were also maintained at Chetwode from the dissolution of the priory till the fall of Notley itself.

Until within about two years ago, though the church was completely destroyed, considerable portions of the domestic buildings were standing incorporated in the Elizabethan farmhouse. These, however, have almost disappeared in the recent rebuilding, which has involved the removal of a fine oak staircase with curious inscriptions, and of most of the windows, which, though blocked, retained much of their tracery. A winding stone staircase still exists in the late Perpendicular angle turret, and some picturesque brick chimneys, tall and square, have been preserved, arising from walls almost entirely re-faced and modernized. The gem of the building, the beautiful corbel table in the frater or refectory, has also survived. This building, now used as a barn,* is a lofty room nearly seventy feet long by twenty-four wide, approached by a kind of transept or wide passage on the south with a good pointed doorway. The corbel table, part of which is figured in Parker's *Introduction*, and there assigned to c. 1250, runs the length of the eastern wall, and consists of a series of trefoil-headed arches resting on richly foliated corbels. The cornice above is filled with a leaf pattern, and the spaces between the heads of the arches adorned with roses, wreaths, or sprays of leaves. Along the outside walls runs a good double string-course, and both in this wall and in those adjoining (which once formed part of the cloisters, the church being beyond) may be noticed some recessed doors, now blocked, of the Early English period. Large heaps of carved stones lie about, including foliated capitals, bases, and sections

* To avoid disappointment, the abbey should not be visited in the autumn, when the corn piled in the barn conceals this carved work. Some incline to the belief that it is not in its right place, but was removed from the church: cf. Walcott's *Monasticon* and Boswell's *Antiquities*.

of deeply-cut mouldings from clustered piers. Towards the east of the fraternity was the cemetery, where bones and stone coffins are still at times disinterred. A plain coffin without a lid may be observed here projecting from a bank.

It is worth returning by a somewhat longer route in order to examine the mediaeval Court-house at Long Crendon, a valuable relic of the plainer style of domestic architecture prevalent in the Edwardian era. Take the lane up-hill from the abbey, and turn to the left on reaching the high road. Reaching the village, the court-house will be seen on the left of the lane which leads to the locked churchyard gate.* It is a low two-storied building, used successively as a wool-store and manorial court; the lower storey is of stone, the projecting upper one of mixed brick and wood-work; and it was for long divided into cottages. It was lately under repair, having been acquired by a society for preserving buildings of historic interest. It is to be hoped that the funds of this and similar societies will enable them to acquire, and so preserve and render easier of access, others of the numerous historic edifices of this district.

On reaching the end of the village, follow a broad road to the left, which after about two miles arrives at the bridge by Thame church.

NOTE ON THE AROUAISIAN CANONS.

This was the first reformed order of Austin canons, being closely followed by the Premonstratensians, Canons of the Holy Sepulchre, and others, with the first of whom the Arouaisians had some analogies, such as wearing white robes, settling in solitary spots, and having no definite ground-plan to their churches.

In a lonely part of Artois near Bapaume, hitherto known as the haunt of robbers, three hermits about 1090 built a cell or oratory, which they dedicated to St. Nicholas and the Holy Trinity. Seven years later, this settlement having grown in size was confirmed by Bishop Lambert of Arras, and became

* In the chancel of Long Crendon church is buried Richard Ridge, last abbot of Notley (*ob.* 1553).

subject to a definite code of rules based on those of St. Augustine, but much more severe. The members might eat no flesh, observed strict silence, and, as Reyner says, "lay at night in their dormitory in woollen tunick," being forbidden to wear any kind of linen.

At first governed by provosts, the parent house became an abbey in 1124, and before the death of the first abbot was at the head of twenty-eight monasteries—in France, Flanders, Ireland, and England. The canons first came to England in 1112, and possessed four or five houses, the names of which are somewhat differently given. Notley and Lilleshall seem certain; Bourne (Lincs.) and Hartland (Devon) are also mentioned. I do not know on what authority Walcott ascribes to them the abbey of Dorchester. The last general chapter was held in 1470, and by the time of the dissolution these houses were probably merged in the mass of the Augustinian order.

VI.

Goring.

A LIKE happy chance to that which causes navigable rivers to flow past important towns usually provided monastic settlements with convenient streams. Where this was not the case, fishponds were always constructed immediately outside the conventual buildings, often, as at Bruerne in this county, forming the sole memorial of ancient religious houses. The upper reaches of the Thames were especially rich in such establishments, ten or twelve having grown up on its banks between Eynsham and Maidenhead. Of all these, two only have left churches in anything of a complete state, the little Benedictine priory of Hurley and its Augustinian contemporary, the nunnery of Garynges or Goring. Though this latter village is gradually being converted into a red-brick watering-place, a cluster of old houses is gathered round the church, some of which probably incorporate portions of the nuns' domestic buildings, and fragments of the cloister-wall may be traced in adjacent gardens. Besides these should be noticed the old "Miller of Mansfield" Inn, a favourite with artists.

The nunnery was founded in the reign of Henry II; the founder is not known, but in the next century we find the patronage in the hands of Edmund, Earl of Cornwall.

Judging by the character of the existing work (Mr. Parker ascribes the tower to c. 1120 *) the church was already standing when it was granted to the nuns, who perhaps enlarged the chancel, which was their own church, leaving the nave for the laity. No south aisle exists, and it may have been removed to make way for the construction of the convent cloisters, and as at Dorchester and other conventual buildings the south wall adjoining them is left windowless except for the clerestory. At the dissolution, as in many other instances, the conventual chancel was demolished, and the nave only retained, with the east wall blocked. In recent times an apsidal chancel has been thrown out; otherwise the church affords a good example of a plain but unspoiled Norman edifice. The interior of the tower has fine groining, and the moulding of the arch opening into the nave is boldly executed. Four solid Norman piers of chalk form the north arcade, and there is a low lean-to north aisle. A few brasses have been placed against the chancel wall, one commemorating a canoness of the early fifteenth century, another, somewhat earlier, interesting for its Norman French inscription. Outside observe the bold pointed stair-turret to the tower, with some good zigzag bands near the middle.

Small though it was, Goring had two dependent cells; one a few miles away at Checkendon, where the road behind Checkendon Court, successor to the priory, is still known as the "Nuns' Walk." Another was at Elvenden, near Woodcote,

* *Glossary of Architecture*, plate 215. The priory was thus founded about the time when the position of canonesses, a title somewhat vaguely applied to communities of women not living as nuns under St. Benedict's rule, was defined, and they were forced to become subject to that of St. Augustine and to renounce all property, by a decree of Eugenius III. (1148). The sisters of Gracedieu are said to have been nuns in the full sense (cf. Gasquet, *English Monastic Life*, 158), and Stevens calls them Cistercians.

and here a farm-house retains some Perpendicular windows and other traces of the ruined nunnery.

The revenues of the priory amounted at the Dissolution to only £60, derived from estates in Oxon., Berks., and Bucks., and it therefore fell with the other smaller houses in 1536, the estates passing first to the Duke of Suffolk and then to Sir Thomas Pope, treasurer of Henry VIII's Court of Augmentations and founder of Trinity College. No list of the prioresses is preserved, but the name of the last, Dame Margarete Wodall, is affixed to the valuation of the commissioners.

Not much is known of the constitution of Austin nunneries, of which there were but few in England. There would of course be a chaplain, probably a confessor besides; but all other posts were, except for a few hired servants, held by women. An interesting picture of the life in one of these Augustinian convents is contained in the account-books of the nunnery of Gracedieu in Leicestershire, summarized in Abbot Gasquet's *English Monastic Life*. We realize there that, as with the Benedictines, the canonesses' relations to the outside world were first as employers of labour, second as the only available instructors of the daughters of neighbouring gentry; these going regularly to reside in the convents (where they were frequently visited by their parents) without being in any way bound to embrace a monastic life.

A return may be made by a hilly road, nearly six miles long, to Compton station, in order to visit the famous de la Bêche tombs of Aldworth, probably the finest collection of 14th century monuments remaining in any parish church. They are eight in number, and though the members of this family were buried at considerable intervals, the canopies of the tombs all belong to the best Decorated period, having delicate hanging tracery and cusped, and rich crocketed pinnacles.

VII.

Abingdon and its Dependencies.

THE main features of this river-side town are well known to the inhabitants of Oxford, and there is no need to describe here St. Helen's Church, with its range of aisles and tall spire, nor the quaint almshouses, called Christ's Hospital, which overlook its churchyard. The remains of the splendid Benedictine abbey (now, through the liberality of the Corporation, restored to a condition of safety, though not yet freed from all modern accretions) are less familiar. This house of Black Monks was founded by an early West-Saxon king in the seventh century, on a hill described as about two miles north of the present town, probably at or near Bayworth, on the outskirts of Bagley Wood. The hill, called Aben, from a British hermit who once lived there, gave its name, if we may trust the legend, to the Abbey itself; and when a later king made a grant to it of the town of Seovesham, and induced the monks to migrate thither, the name of the monastery superseded that of the town. More likely the first syllables are merely a corruption of "abbey." Successive grants from various sovereigns and nobles endowed the convent with enormous wealth. The deed granting it "all the woods of Bagley and Cumnor, with all the game they might find therein," can still be read in the *Monasticon*. The main channel of the Thames was blocked by the monks, and a heavy toll exacted from all boats passing through the arm enclosed in the abbey precincts. Cells, granges, and manors were plentifully scattered through Oxon. and Berks., and served to collect and forward to headquarters the extensive revenues of the abbey, which even in the time of its decay amounted to nearly £2,000 a year.*

* The abbey had lately been impoverished by law-suits, and the discipline was unsatisfactory. Cf. Gasquet, ii. 293-5, where an account of its surrender (1538) is given. More distant cells were at Edwardstow (Suffolk), and Colne Earls (Essex).

The abbot sat in Parliament with the other spiritual peers, and was in fact the feudal lord of the town, which continued unincorporated and a mere dependency of the abbey till the Dissolution, as well as of a large country district.

As two parish churches already existed, the monks' church, a magnificent building over 300 feet long, with central and western towers of the 15th century, was not required for congregational purposes, and was destroyed along with its cloisters, chapter-house, and all other ecclesiastical structures. The ruins became a quarry for the neighbourhood, and many of the older houses must retain portions of the stone-work. The very foundations of the church are unknown, but it probably stood in the gardens of a house called "The Abbey," to the north of the existing ruins.

Those arriving from the Oxford road (still known as the "Vineyard") or from the station, should keep along Stert Street till St. Nicholas' Church is reached, and then turn to the left under the Abbey gateway, and continue along the lane, at the end of which the existing domestic buildings stand in a yard.

The gate-house is an impressive Perpendicular building, with fine canopied niche, and the arms of England and the Abbey in the spandrels of the door. It long served as a prison, but now forms part of the municipal buildings. Within it is much modernized, and many of the rooms date from the early 18th century, with some good wood-carvings of that era. Several interesting pictures are preserved here, including specimens of Vandyke and Gainsborough, and old prints of destroyed antiquities of the town, such as the fine cross demolished by the army of the Parliament. A small guild chapel of the 15th century, now used as a police court, forms part of the same block.

At the first door on the right after passing the gateway a guide may be obtained for the ruins, which are locked. They consist of two large buildings, continuous but of different eras, each divided into two storeys. The first is called a guest-house, and

is a good example of early 15th century domestic architecture. It was once divided both above and below into dormitories, and traces of the partitions may be observed. There is a fine open roof of wood, and a curious outside gallery to the upper storey, into which the windows opened. It is partitioned off by wooden posts into small divisions, corresponding in breadth to the dormitories. The next, adjoining the guest-house, and shorter than the latter, which has a length of more than 100 feet and appears to have been longer, is called conjecturally the house of the Prior, who was the abbot's subordinate and responsible to him for the discipline of the monastery. It is a fine example of Early English. The chief features of the upper floor are the beautiful stone fireplace with octagonal shafts and foliated capitals, surmounted by a tall chimney with unique lancet openings,* and the rare arrangement of three stone doorways forming a triangle; two of these open into the two rooms into which this floor is divided, the third on to the outside staircase. Beneath is a groined crypt, apparently once the kitchen, and long used as a storehouse for beer, like the Franciscan church at Gloucester. The roof groining rests on octagonal columns without capitals, and a doorway opens direct on to the river bank.† Under the outhouse opposite are cellars once belonging to the Abbey, and portions of outbuildings, probably a farm or grange, remain at Barton about half a mile to the N.E.

The work of the monks was by no means limited to their own town. A cell existed at Great Milton, the foundations of which were still visible in Leland's time by the churchyard, and to the aid and advice of the abbey we may possibly attribute the

* Cf. Parker's *Glossary*, plate 54.

† It would be interesting to know if it was through here that the kitchener received the "sticks of eels," which various fisheries were bound to supply at the beginning of Lent. During the same season "from every boat which passed up the Thames carrying herrings, except it were a royal barge, the kitchener took toll of a hundred of the fish, which had to be brought to him by the boat's boy, who for his personal service received five herrings and a jug of beer" (Gasquet, *English Monastic Life*, p. 81).

excellent Decorated work in that fine church. Of much the same style is the south chapel of Cumnor, used as a mausoleum of the abbots, who built as their country seat the adjoining Cumnor Hall. Here the last abbot, Thomas Rowland, more fortunate than his brother of Reading, retired on a pension of £200, his twenty-four monks having to content themselves with £6 or £8 apiece. He was succeeded in the occupation of the Hall by the notorious Anthony Foster. By a curious chance portions of this 14th century Hall have rejoined another later fabric of the same abbey, being used to restore Wytham church, which was constructed by the monks *c.* 1480. Another country seat of the abbots still stands to the south of Sutton Courtney church. It is known as "the Abbey," and dates from the 14th century. Many of the finer churches in the neighbourhood owe much to the architectural skill of the monks, *e.g.* Cuddesdon, Lewknor, and Uffington. Another remnant of the fallen house is the library of Pembroke College, Oxford, once the refectory of Broadgates Hall established by the abbey for the education of its younger novices.* Some connection between the college and Abingdon still exists in the annual award of scholarships to students from the grammar school.

* The Benedictines also possessed Canterbury (now part of Ch. Ch.) and Durham (Trinity) Colleges, dependent on those monasteries, and Gloucester (Worcester), shared by several. The Augustinians of Oseney had St. Mary's College (Frewin Hall), the Cistercians St. Bernard's College (St. John's).

VIII.

The Alien Houses of Oxfordshire.

FOR the first two centuries after the Norman Conquest the Court and noble feudatories, among whom so large a part of England was divided, continued to look on the land beyond the Channel as their real home, and England as a source of revenue for themselves and their foreign dependents. This attitude was reflected in their dealings with the church. Wealthy bishoprics and abbacies were conferred by the Crown on foreign ecclesiastics, who usually resided abroad and drew the revenues of their offices, performing the duties by deputy. In the same way wealthy landowners by granting English estates to Norman, Flemish, or Angevin monasteries encouraged them to establish therein "alien priories," or cells closely attached to the parent Benedictine or Cluniac house, which appointed the prior or guardian and drew the bulk of the revenues. Often the foreign name of the monastery was actually introduced, *e.g.* Newton Longueville (Bucks.), Grosmont (Yorks.), St. Mary Rouncevall (London).

At first prior and monks alike were settlers from the mother house, and though later on English members might be admitted they were not well treated, and difficulties were placed in the way of their advancement.* Eventually when all members of the house were English it was felt as a serious grievance that a foreign convent should have the appointment of the prior and claim all surplus revenues. The control extended even to matters architectural, and in more than one alien priory we find traces of that flamboyant style so rare in England.

As national sentiment gained strength after the loss of the French provinces under John, the number of these houses began

* Gasquet, *i.* pp. 46-9, where a petition to the king is quoted.

to diminish, and many were transferred to English monasteries. Their revenues became liable to temporary confiscation during war, and as the inmates were suspected of acting as spies, monks from coast priories were required to withdraw twenty miles from the sea at such times. It was not till the reign of Henry V, under the stress of military exigencies, that the last of this undesirable system was seen, and the alien houses dissolved *en bloc*. By then the age of faith was passing away; the estates, being confiscated to the Crown, were not always transferred to other religious bodies, but often granted to schools and colleges, even to laymen, and the churches made parochial or suffered to go to ruin. Thus of alien possessions in this neighbourhood Steventon (a cell of Bec) passed to Westminster Abbey, Charlton-on-Otmoor (a manor, possibly a cell, of St. Ebrulf in Utica, though more likely managed by their priory at Ware) to the Carthusians at Shene; Cogges and Minster Lovel were granted by Henry VI to Eton, and Swyncombe, also a manor or cell of Bec, to the Duke of Suffolk, while the cell of St. Faith's Longueville, at Newton, helped to provide revenues for New College, Oxford.

Cogges priory, "*Prioratus Cogensis*," was founded by a member of the great Oxfordshire family of de Arsic, near Witney, in 1103, as a cell to the Benedictine abbey of Fécamp, and about a century later Maud Lovel gave the neighbouring Minster Lovel to the abbey of Ivry. Adjoining both was a noble manor-house. That at Cogges, which belonged successively to the families of de Arsic and de Greys (whose name is perpetuated by "Rotherfield Greys") still stands, and retains much fine work of the 13th century. Minster Lovel, the stately ruin overhanging the Windrush so loved by landscape painters, belongs to a later age, when both priories had passed away.

Cogges is reached from Oxford by the Witney road, from which a *détour* to the left may be made to visit the well preserved and awe-inspiring frescoes on the walls of Southleigh church. At the foot of the last hill before entering Witney take

a lane to the left, and Cogges is reached. It consists of the diminutive priory church, the vicarage, which retains some 13th century fragments once part of the monastic buildings, the manor-house and a school, the rest of the village being far away beyond a hill. Some good Norman work remains in the nave of the church, and the little octagonal tower with its quaint cap should be noticed; but the most interesting feature is the rich chantry chapel on the north, apparently built about sixty years before the suppression of the house, and bearing clear traces of French influence. An ornate canopied piscina is attached to one of the piers. Round the roof runs a cornice, the corbels being formed by animals playing musical instruments. The windows of this chapel are flat-headed, the tracery being of the flamboyant type.

A lane leads over the two arms of the Windrush, and between some high walls, when one unexpectedly finds oneself in the chief street of Witney, close to the picturesque market-house. For Minster Lovel take the opposite street (Corn Street), and at the cemetery keep up the hill along the Burford road. After about two miles the fine group of church and ruined manor house appears in the valley on the right. These can be reached after crossing the Windrush by the monks' bridge.

Though the church is usually regarded as that of the priory,* perhaps on account of its central tower, and though the richly panelled font and pulpit and the fine groining of the tower prove that the construction was directed by no mean architect, the late character of the work forbids us to suppose that any considerable part could have been in existence when the Act of 1414 dissolved all alien houses. The church seems to have been built, probably on the old foundations, about the middle of the 15th century, at the same time as the manor house, whose ruins form so striking an object in the background, and it is probably in the latter building rather than the church that portions of the monastic house may have been incorporated.

* So the *Monasticon*, vi. 1052, and Walcott.

IX.

The Carthusians and East Hendred.

THE laxity and abuses of many kinds prevailing among the premier order of monks, those of St. Benedict, in the tenth and following centuries induced earnest churchmen, both within and without that order, to endeavour, while adhering more or less closely to the rule of St. Benedict, by means of stricter regulations to revive the true monastic ideals. Thus arose the four important orders named from Cluny, Chartreuse, Citeaux, and from the English saint Gilbert of Sempringham, all of which had several houses in England.

The Cluniac order was not represented in this district, and the gloomy Cistercians did not find the level and open country of the Midlands so suitable for their settlements as the rocky valleys and wild moors of the west and north. Of the Cistercian houses of Oxfordshire that which is now Thame Park has left few vestiges, while of the more important abbey of Rewley a solitary gateway overhangs the Oxford Canal opposite Worcester College Gardens.

The Gilbertines present many features of interest. The order was founded to give admission to persons of the humblest rank who wished to enter a monastic life, and the larger priories consisted of two wings occupied by canons and nuns respectively, the former following the Augustinian rule, the latter the Cistercian. The one Gilbertine house in Oxfordshire was the priory of St. Leonard's at Clattercote in the extreme north, confined to men only. The foundations and cellars have been incorporated into a farm-house, and the fish-ponds have been turned into a reservoir for the canal.

The Carthusians aimed at reconciling the solitary and the monastic life. Distinguished by their robes of white, wearing

inner garments of hair-cloth, and subsisting on the plainest food, the monks were distributed each in a separate cottage, with a garden surrounded by high walls, but joined to the other cottages by a corridor or cloister. Two churches were constructed in their priories, one for themselves and one for public services. In some cases, as at Witham, Somerset, the latter only has survived.

Owing partly to their austerity, partly to their hostility to secular interference, which brought upon them the cruel persecution of 1535, St. Bruno's brethren were not popular in England, their badge of the globe and cross was seldom seen here, and the few Carthusian houses were founded at long intervals. The richest of these "charter-houses," as they became by a popular corruption, was the priory of Shene in Surrey, founded by Henry V from the spoils of the suppressed alien houses, and also endowed with the royal manor of East Hendred, a flourishing town of cloth-workers on the edge of the Berkshire downs.

The charter of foundation makes elaborate provisions for the management of the manor of "Eschinrech" or "Esthenreth," as it is variously described; how the prior should have full manorial rights and jurisdiction, should cause a market to be held every week "per diem martis," and two fairs of eight days each yearly.

To administer this important dependency the priory raised a small cell for two or three monks, with chapel adjoining, at the junction of the three chief streets, and this humble foundation has long survived the mother house at Richmond.

Throughout the later part of the 15th century the English cloth industry decayed; Hendred lay off the main routes of traffic, and its trade passed to Ilsley, Wantage, and other towns. By the time of the Dissolution the monks' Berkshire estates were valued at only £36 15s., and in another eighty years the market was suppressed by royal mandate. A curious chapter of history might be written on the strange decay of so many Berkshire market-towns, from Seacourt by Wytham, a populous

place under the Saxons and now one or two farms, to Wargrave, Thatcham, and Shrivenham, whose greatness is also in the past.

East Hendred, now a village of about 800 inhabitants, lies two miles S.W. of Steventon station. The monks' chapel stands on a triangular grass-plot in the centre of the village, and has on its north side, once reached from the chapel by a staircase now blocked, some small rooms, which may date back to the monks' own time. They must, however, have been underpinned during rebuilding, as the lower walls are of much later date. The chapel is oblong, of early Perpendicular work, resembling the somewhat earlier and almost equally ruinous chapel of St. Bartholomew near Oxford. The east window, of three lights, has some good tracery, and the rood-screen is little injured. The other windows are flat-headed, of two lights, one opening into a ruinous cottage, which will probably be shortly removed in the restoration now (1904) contemplated. The roof is high-pitched and good, but the long use of the chapel as a granary has resulted in the disappearance of most of the window tracery, and both windows and doors are still boarded up.

The adjacent parish church is a fine building, chiefly Early English, in size corresponding rather to the past than present population of the place. The nave piers have good foliage in the capitals, a rood-loft remains over the screen enclosing the south or Eyston chapel; remarkable piers without arches support the roof of the south aisle. The 17th century pulpit bears on one panel a head of Charles I, and the ancient wooden lectern is of very unusual design, each of its three feet representing the fore-quarters of a sea-monster.

Other points of interest in the village are the mediaeval Roman Catholic chapel attached to the manor-house, farm buildings of the 15th century, opposite and perhaps once dependent on the priory, and many quaint cottages with overhanging upper storeys.

A return may be made through Harwell, where the church has good 13th and 14th century work, to Upton or Didcot stations.

X.

The Cistercians and Great Corwell.

THE Cistercians were the branch of reformed Benedictines which struck deepest root in England. Introduced into the country at Waverley Abbey, Surrey, in 1128, by the end of the century they had establishments in all parts, at the time of the Dissolution being still in possession of over a hundred houses of monks or nuns. They were not statesmen and scholars like the Benedictines, nor preachers like the canons regular; their objects were prayer and meditation, uniformity and simplicity of living, solitude, and an outdoor life. Their houses, which were all abbeys and all dedicated to the Virgin, were nominally ten miles distant from any town, and were placed in wild and dismal spots, usually in some well-watered valley, which, through the efforts of these farmer monks and their "conversi," or lay brethren, became before long rich and fertile.

Corruption indeed came to this order, and at an earlier period than to some others. As the brethren of Llanthony said, when after reviewing other monastic communities they eventually enrolled themselves among the Augustinian canons, "the Cistercians lived an isolated life, dissociated themselves from other religious, and hankered after amassing wealth with restless longing."* Yet their ideal of religious simplicity and their love of the country exercised a wide influence. Even their churches were marked by a pure and severe style. These had one, central, tower (for like the White canons the Cistercians would admit only guests to their churches), no triforium, no lady-chapel, a short square east end, a square chapter-house divided by pillars into three alleys. The frater was at right angles to the church instead of parallel, as with other orders, and the dormitories were open from end to end.

* *Monasticon*, vi. p. 130.

Among the many Cistercian ruins of England, which include some of the most famous abbeys, may be mentioned Fountains, Buildwas, Tintern (the position of which in the precipitous valley of the Wye is characteristic of the White monks' taste), and the two Hampshire abbeys of Netley and Beaulieu. The last of these was founded about 1204 by King John, who endowed it with certain lands in Berkshire, in the parishes of Faringdon, Langford, and Great Coxwell. The better to administer these the monks of Beaulieu established a cell at Faringdon, and a grange or farm, probably under the direction of one or two of their number, at Coxwell. They also appear to have built the small church or chapel of Little Faringdon, so called, perhaps, because it was dependent on the cell at Great Faringdon. Though the former place was until recently included in the parish of Langford, so long as the monks still appointed a vicar or chaplain, it must have been in some respects ecclesiastically independent of Langford, which was subordinate to Lincoln Minster.

The convent at Faringdon has disappeared, but as an expedition to Coxwell will probably start from that town, it may be worth while to mention in passing two or three striking features in the large Early English church. The chancel belongs to the period following on the establishment of the monks in the town, though what influence they exercised on the work we do not know; it is fine and graceful, as are the richly-foliaged clustered piers which support the central tower, since the Civil Wars deprived of its spire. Among other unusual features is the hanging tracery in the head of a window in the north transept, the cusps ending in men's or animals' heads. This window is Decorated, but the ironwork on the 13th century south door also presents some remarkable forms of heads.

Leaving by the Swindon road Coxwell lies some two miles S.W. Take the turn to the right about a mile and a half from Faringdon, and right again on entering the village, when the gigantic barn of the monks' grange will be seen in front.

Though we may not agree with William Morris in regarding this as one of the finest buildings in England, it is certainly a noble monument of the domestic architecture of the 14th century, and superior in size and dignity to the famous abbot's barn at Glastonbury, though less ornate. One hundred and fifty feet long, more than forty feet wide, and fifty high, its proportions are those of a church, though the sharply pointed roof at once shows its object. Lying north and south it has a large transept on the west side, now boarded off and divided into two storeys, and a smaller transept or porch on the east. A semblance of aisles is provided by the two rows of pillars which support the roof within. These are square and of wood, but resting on stone bases about four feet high. The deep under-cutting to the stone piers forming the inner angles of the porches should be noticed, and the fine rows of massive recessed buttresses. At each end is a large doorway with a slightly depressed round-headed arch, and at the summit of the gables some good moulding. There are no windows, the little light being admitted by square and oblong holes in the walls.

The farm-house to the south may be on the site of the dwelling of the monks who stored their harvest and rents in the barn, but the present building probably does not date back beyond the Elizabethan period. At the south end of the village is the church, which has a few points of interest: a Decorated window with hanging canopy, similar to that at Faringdon but plainer, and some quaint brasses in the floor of the nave, representing "Willm Morys of Cokyswell," his wife and children, in costumes of the 16th century. The nature of the English inscription suggests that these are anterior to the Reformation.

A walk of three miles and a half, through Little Coxwell, leads to the fine church of Uffington, one of the best in the county, and a favourable specimen of the architectural skill of that great church-building house, Abingdon Abbey. The chancel and transepts are excellent examples of pure Early English, but the nave has been spoiled by a low roof which cuts off the

heads of the windows. The curious triangular-headed triple lancets in the transepts, the graduated sedilia, the groined south porch, and the finely recessed S.E. door all deserve careful study.

XI.

The Friars in Berks and Oxon.

THE early part of the 13th century witnessed a great revival of religious enthusiasm, fostered by the arrival in England of the preaching and mendicant friars. Unlike the more exclusive monks they mingled freely with the populace, set up their habitations in the most squalid quarters of large towns, and devoted themselves to preaching and to visiting the sick and needy, rather than to raising splendid buildings or copying classical and theological writings. Unlike the monks they were not attached to any particular house, but circulated freely among the convents of their order in the same province or diocese.

It is true that a decline was not long in setting in. The munificence of royal and other benefactors endowed the once humble friaries, the life of the inmates became more luxurious, and attracted men of a less earnest disposition. As their fervour and devoutness at first were more marked than those of the regulars, so they came to be a prey to greater sloth and worldliness. They also lost popularity, especially with the government, owing to their continued relations with foreign members of their order and their obedience to a foreign superior. To the anti-national sympathies of both friars and monks, especially in cases of papal aggressions, as contrasted with the attitude of the secular clergy, may be attributed, much more than to trumped-up accusations of immorality and superstition, that alienation of popular feeling which alone made the Dissolution possible.

The character of the friars, of whom numerous bodies settled

in both university towns, differed considerably from that of friars in other parts. Recognizing that they could best serve the church by seconding the efforts of the infant universities, and themselves often students from the universities of the continent, they established valuable schools of "grammar" or literature, and in Oxford attained to a high degree of culture. The Grey friars' convent had connected with it such men as Roger Bacon, Grostête Bishop of Lincoln, Duns Scotus, and William of Occam; while the school of grammar set up by the Austin friars to the N.E. of the city exercised an abiding influence on the examination system of the university. Owing to a variety of causes, such as the comparatively small extent of the buildings and the fact that they were erected in populous towns already provided with parish churches but ready to use up the materials of a destroyed religious house for secular purposes, very little remains of English friaries, and even their sites are often matters of doubt. The only building of any importance left in this diocese is the mutilated but still beautiful Franciscan church at Reading, which, after serving for many generations as a workhouse, then as a prison, was about forty years ago restored to its original purpose.

The Black or Preaching friars of the order of St. Dominic were the first to settle in Oxford, about 1223. They followed the rule of St. Augustine, and their costume of white tunic and hood with black cloak for wearing at church or in the streets was a modification of the canons' robes. They were the most aristocratic of the orders, and especially in places where there was no large religious house, their convents almost attained the dignity of a monastery.

Distressed at the gross ignorance of the lower orders, they made it their business to preach the Gospel to them in the plainest and most familiar language, and frequently set up an out-door pulpit adjoining their convent, such as still remains in the Dominican friary at Hereford. Their churches were large and plain, well fitted for preaching, as they usually had no aisles.

Their first house in Oxford was near the site of the present Town Hall, and a description may be found in Hurst's *Oxford Topography* of a richly carved cresset excavated there, and conjectured to have belonged to this settlement. In 1259 land was granted to them by the De Vere family further S.W., adjoining what was long known as the Preachers' Bridge, over the now covered-over Trill Mill stream. The chief buildings were near the bottom of Littlegate Street; the Priory mill stood in what is now Albion Place, and an old house at the corner of Friar Street must be close to the site of the church, for the discovery of stone coffins and other remains near and beneath the present Baptist chapel proves that the friars' cemetery, never far removed from the church, lay just here. If any remains of this house exist is doubtful, but the ancient wall near the west end of Rose Place may once have been part of the boundary, and the head of an ogee arch may be noticed bricked up in Cambridge Street.

The Franciscans, the most popular of the orders, distinguished by their coarse brown robe and knotted cord, arrived from London soon after the Dominicans. Their convent stood a little further west, towards the south of St. Ebbe's Church, and successive grants transferred to it such large estates that it was reckoned inferior in wealth and position to Osney and St. Frideswide's alone of the Oxford monastic institutions. The church lay somewhere in the neighbourhood of Penson's Gardens, and the adjoining Church Place still perpetuates its name. It is recorded to have had a tiled roof, flat east end, and no triforium; the tower may have been one of the eight thought worthy to be symbolized in the celebrated pageant of 1504, but the building as a whole seems to have been inferior to the church of the Austin Friary. A road to the north, once Freren Street, now called by the indistinctive name of Church Street, led to the small house of the "Brethren of the Penitence of Jesus," or Penitentiarians, in Paradise Square. These were suppressed early in the fourteenth century, and their land being transferred to the Franciscans, became the latter's park or "Paradise." The

library of the Grey friars' convent, which preserved the books both of Bacon and Grostête, was one of the most valuable of the time, but as corruption spread throughout the order the books were disposed of or allowed to decay, and when Leland paid his celebrated visit but little of it remained.

The buildings of the convent, which even before the Dissolution were in an almost ruinous state, were demolished within a short time, but how the materials were disposed of is unknown. One old wall on the right-hand side of Littlegate Street, with some good coping, seems to have formed the eastern boundary of the convent's possession, and, as Mr. Little remarks in his valuable work on the Grey friars in the Oxford Historical Society's series, "some of the stones no doubt form the foundation work of many houses in St. Ebbe's."

The Franciscans first settled in Reading in 1233, and about fifty years later came into possession of the site where their church still stands. Being favoured by Edward I, they raised a large convent, the church being completed about 1311, and the splendid west window added towards the middle of the century. The present restoration of this church, though retaining some valuable portions, can give little idea of the original form. Most of the nave and of the Perpendicular north aisle are parts of the old structure, but there is no chancel and the transepts are modern. The five-light west window is figured in Parker's *A B C of Architecture*, and is an excellent example of the "net-like" or reticulated form of Decorated tracery, inclining to the flamboyant character, enclosing quatrefoils in each "mesh" of the tracery, and under a segmental arch. The modern south window is a copy of it. Some curious encaustic tiles, discovered in the floor, are displayed against the west wall, and the old open-work Perpendicular roof may be seen in St. Mary's Church, which lies a short distance S.E., and also incorporates much of the materials of the Benedictine abbey.

It was not till late in the 14th century that any friars settled in Bucks, probably owing to the absence of large towns. In

1386 land was given to the Franciscans by the Boteler family near the south end of Aylesbury, on a spot afterwards the seat of the Pakingtons. This house was in a state of great poverty at the time of the Dissolution.*

The Carmelites, or White friars, reached Oxford about the middle of the 13th century, and settled in the neighbourhood of Worcester College. In the reign of Edward II they received a grant of the royal palace of Beaumont, the birthplace of Cœur de Lion, which lay north of the western part of the modern Beaumont Street. The royal chapel became the convent church, and the cemetery extended across the street towards Gloucester Green. The possessions of the Carmelites now reached some way along what is still known as Friars' Entry, and they acquired certain rights over St. Mary Magdalene Church, to which they are said to have added the beautiful Decorated south aisle, together with a crypt beneath it. At the Dissolution the Carmelite buildings became a quarry for the neighbourhood, but some portions remained on the site till the construction of Beaumont Street in 1825. Part of the materials were used for the foundations of Wolsey's contemplated chapel to the Cardinal College, which were discovered not long ago on the north side of the large quadrangle of Christ Church; others helped to raise St. John's College library, and some large blocks on the south face of the same college are said to belong to what was first a royal palace and then a Carmelite refectory.

Henry III, the great patron of religious houses, settled the Austin friars in Oxford in 1268, three years after the formation of that order by Pope Eugenius IV from an amalgamation of several other bodies of friars. They wore black, like the Dominicans, but were distinguished by a broad leathern belt. They are often called the Hermits. The convent church apparently lay on the site of Wadham College hall, the cemetery occupied the grass-plot on the south of the college, and the

* Gasquet, ii. 256. Dr. Loudon here too found scope for his predatory exploits.

domestic buildings reached up to Holywell Street. The eastern boundary-wall, tall and covered with ivy, may be observed behind the chapel, and part of 35, Holywell Street, dating from the 15th century, may have belonged to the friary; but all the rest of the ruins into which it had fallen were probably cleared away when the college was built. The excellence of the windows in the chapel has indeed induced several architects to surmise that the remains may be more extensive; and though records exist of the construction of most of these windows in the reign of Charles I, portions of the convent church, which was regarded as inferior to Oseney and St. Frideswide alone, may have served as models. One painted window indeed remains, once set up in the friary to commemorate members of the Curzon family, and removed with some brasses at the Dissolution of friaries (1538) to Waterperry church. It dates from 1527, and represents a man in armour kneeling, his wife, some coats of arms, and above a figure of the Virgin.*

An offshoot of these Austin friars were the blue-frocked Bonshommes, and though none of their few English houses were in these counties, the convent of Ashridge on the borders of Hertfordshire, founded by Edmund Earl of Cornwall towards the end of the 13th century, owned the two Oxfordshire manors of Chesterton and Ambrosden, and left enduring marks on the architecture of both churches. Both have portions which belonged to a plain Norman parochial church; the first was reconstructed, the second had a rich south aisle added in the Decorated period, the work in each case displaying that elaborateness and attention to detail which generally point to monastic influences.

It may be added that, though most modern authorities regard the Bonshommes as friars, the *Monasticon* classes them among the canons regular, and it was certainly unusual for friars to own manors and advowsons so far from their convents as in this

* This window is in the south chapel over the canopied tomb of a knight. The palimpsest brasses are in the nave floor.

instance. The chief monument they have left of themselves is the fine priory church of Edington in Wiltshire.

Little need be said of the minor orders of friars. Oxford was the only large town in the three counties, and was so crowded with ecclesiastical establishments that smaller bodies gained little foothold and soon disappeared. The Crutched friars, with their cross-handled staff and the red cross on their tunics, lived for a time near St. Peter-in-the-East, and not far off was a priory of the Trinitarians or Maturines, distinguished by a white robe with red and blue cross. Their chief object was to collect money for the ransom of Christian prisoners in the East. This order afforded the only exception to the feeling which impelled the friars to confine themselves to town districts. They had a small house, now destroyed, at Thuffield or Nuffield among the Chilterns, and an estate on the hill leading to Donnington Castle in Berkshire was granted them in 1360. Here they built a priory, which lasted till the Dissolution.

XII.

Other Religious Houses.

THE aim of these notes has been mainly to point out antiquities somewhat off the beaten track; and, though these south Midland counties were by no means so rich in monastic settlements as Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, or even East Anglia, several well-known buildings have been passed over, as well as others whose remains are scanty, or which are difficult of access from being in private occupation.

Dorchester naturally occupies a premier position in the first class, alike from its interesting history and the beauty which still characterizes its long and stately naves. In spite of defects, like the irregularity of its ground-plan and the meanness of its "churchwarden" tower, this abbey is entitled to a very high

place among the architectural monuments of the country through the rich flowing tracery of its windows, and the elaborate carving of piscina, sedilia, and many other portions.

Godstow is an even more familiar object, alike on account of the events connected with its history and its romantic situation. Engravings of the nunnery as it was little more than a century ago still show one tall but ruinous tower of the church with fine intersecting arcade, and some fairly perfect domestic buildings; but now a roofless Perpendicular chapel and a long ivy-covered wall alone mark Fair Rosamund's resting-place.

Of the companion Benedictine nunnery of Littlemore the remains are hardly greater. Founded by Roger de Sandford in the time of Henry II, it held its own till Wolsey secured its suppression in order to annex its revenues to his new foundation of Cardinal's College in Oxford. The present building, which lies about half a mile S.E. of Littlemore church, is still known as the Mynchery, from the old English "mynchin," a nun. It consists of a two-storeyed house, chiefly 15th century, but with traces of Early English work in windows at the back. The front view presents some good mullioned windows, and a square-headed door with carved spandrels.

A footpath leads west from this building to the middle of Sandford village, and here, at the foot of the hill N.W. of the church, is all that remains of the house of the Knights Templars removed from their earlier establishment at "Temple" Cowley, and eventually changed into a Commandery of the Knights of St. John. The dwelling-house, which incorporated some portions of the domestic buildings, has been lately rebuilt, but a barn near the entrance is conjectured to have once formed the chapel of the Preceptory. It has a good recessed doorway of Early English date, and portions of a blocked east window.*

* The possibility of a nunnery having existed on this site is discussed in Parker's *Architectural Antiquities*, pp. 358-9, where an illustration of the front of the Mynchery is given, and a reference made to Hearne proving that the ruins of the church were still visible to the north in the 18th century, also part of the refectory.

Interesting domestic buildings of the Decorated and Perpendicular periods respectively survive in the Augustinian priory of Wroxton,* near Banbury, and in the Benedictine nunnery of Studley, near the southern border of Otmoor. As however these are in private occupation they must be passed over.

Somewhat longer expeditions give access to a large number of interesting buildings of this class. An hour's journey from Oxford is enough to bring the tourist into very different surroundings, the fertile vale of Evesham, on the banks of the Avon and within sight of the Bredon and Malvern Hills. The two great Worcestershire abbeys of Evesham and Pershore may form the objects of a pleasant day's tour. The mitred abbey of Evesham was one of the richest and most splendid in England. Even at the time of the Dissolution its annual revenues were nearly £1,200, and its dependencies were numerous and widely scattered. The fine church, more than 260 feet in length, has gone, but the tall panelled bell-tower, one of the latest products of Gothic architecture, groups impressively with the towers of the two fine churches close by the Avon bank. It was erected by the last genuine abbot, Clement Lichfield, who also constructed the fan-traceried chantries in the parish churches. Many other portions of the abbey may be noticed, such as a gateway with Norman arcading, and a Decorated arch once leading into the chapter-house, with double rows of carved figures in the soffit.

Seven miles further along the Avon valley Pershore is reached, the site of a Benedictine abbey not so rich as Evesham, but one which has left more important remains. The nave of the church was indeed destroyed at the Dissolution, but the beautiful Early English choir, together with the crossing, transepts and central tower, one of the finest examples of early Decorated work, were purchased by the townspeople to serve as a parish church. The

* An account of this is contained in A. Beasley's *History of Banbury*, where there are also several facts concerning the neighbouring priories of Clattercote and Chalcombe, as well as the leper hospital of St. John within the town.

masses of clustered columns and the roof-groining of the choir (now used as a nave), and the windows and triforium of the lantern tower, deserve careful study.

About the same distance from Oxford in another direction the two Bedfordshire abbeys of Elstow and Dunstable, at one period designed by Henry VIII to serve as joint cathedrals for their county and that of Bucks,* should not be passed over. The Benedictine nunnery of Helenstow or Elstow, near Bedford, has good Norman work in the nave, and a remarkable Early English west front. Like the Augustinian priory at Dunstable it has lost most of the east end. The west front of this latter is even richer, being a curious combination of 12th and 13th century work. The ornament of the great Norman west door, though somewhat weatherbeaten, is scarcely surpassed for boldness and variety by any other building.

An interesting branch of this subject is the study of the large number of parish churches once in monastic possession, and built or rebuilt under the direction of the patrons. Many of the Oxfordshire churches underwent a great restoration in the perfect Gothic style of the 14th century, and in several cases, as at Kidlington, a dependency of Oseney, Merton, Stanton St. John, and Combe (this last early Perpendicular) all attached to Eynsham, the excellence of the work then done may be ascribed to monkish architects.

It could be wished that some attempt were made to classify these productions, and to ascertain if any special peculiarities characterize the buildings raised under the direction of each House.

* In the same document he assigns Oseney and Thame (probably the Cistercian abbey) as cathedrals for Berks and Oxon.

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